

South Dakota Department of Education Special Education Programs

Hanson School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Cornbelt cooperative forms

- Parent survey
- Referrals
- Publications of child find notices
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results
- Table A
- Teacher survey
- Screening
- Budget information
- Child count

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded the Hanson School District has one person in charge of recording child count for the Student Information Management System and information on the infinite campus site is available to every parent to be accessed at their home site. The district sends a special education staff member to the local day care to provide early intervention services to all students. The pre-kindergarten program for the district is open to all children age four to five at no cost to parents. Language group services are provided bi-monthly by the speech therapist to kindergarten through third grade students. Title 1, Reading Recovery and early intervention programs are available to students at the Hanson School District.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Hanson School District child find activities, screening and referral procedures are in compliance with federal and state guidelines. Policies and procedures regarding placement of students voluntarily enrolled in private schools, reporting suspension and expulsion of students and the provision of special education to eligible students at no cost to parents meet state and federal requirements. Personnel working with children with disabilities are fully licensed or certified and have opportunity for professional development. The graduation rate for students with disabilities attending Hanson School District is commensurate with students who are non-disabled.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to improve their child find activities to ensure as many preschool children as possible are screened each year.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Based upon observations and interviews with district staff, the monitoring team concurs the pre-kindergarten services provided to children in the Hanson School District is a promising practice. Preschool children receive services three full days and two half days per week. These services are available to children with disabilities as well as to children without disabilities. Special education staff also provides early intervention services to all students attending the local day care. Group activities are provided to enhance vocabulary, language and pre-reading skills. The preschool and daycare activities are designed to prepare children for a structured school environment. Once in kindergarten, vocabulary and language group activities continue in the regular classroom to all kindergarten through third grade students on a bi-monthly basis.

Through interview, the monitoring team determined another area of promising practice is the district's Infinite Campus program. The computerized tracking system is used to maintain individualized student data on the internet. Information contained within the students' profile includes daily class assignments,

test grades, daily grades etc. This information is passcode protected and can be accessed anytime by the student's parents.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the area identified as needing improvement under general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables G,H, I, J, B,C,E,F,K, L, M, N
- TAT information
- Teacher file reviews
- Initial referral
- Parent and teacher report forms
- Parent form for information
- Age at referral
- Number of students screened
- Personnel development education
- Preschool age
- Number of referrals not resulting in evaluations
- School age
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded special education services were provided for students at no cost to parents. Extended school year is provided to all students who qualified per the individual education program. Administrators have been trained in suspension/expulsion procedures for students on individual education programs.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through observation and interview, the monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables G,H, I, J,
- TAT information
- Teacher file reviews
- Initial referral
- Surveys
- Parent and teacher report forms
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent form for information

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded inviting next year's teacher to the student individual education programs team meetings and the opportunity for professional development as promising practices.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded only valid evaluation tools are used when determining eligibility for special education services. Parents have input into the reevaluation process. Evaluation results are explained and copies are provided to parents. Prior notices requirements for meetings are consistently implemented. Services to students with disabilities are implemented according to the individual education program. Accommodations available to students including assistive technology, interpreters and various communication systems, such as picture symbols, communication boards, and large keyboards. Special education staff receives training on a yearly basis. The comprehensive plan contains appropriate procedures for independent educational evaluation.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded initial evaluations and reevaluations need to be completed within the required 25-day timeline. Functional assessments need to be consistently conducted and brought forth into the present level of performance. All evaluations listed on the prior notice/consent for evaluation need to be conducted and all evaluations must be multifaceted.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded transition evaluations were not consistently conducted prior to the student turning 16 years old.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

Based upon interviews with district staff, the monitoring team could not validate the areas identified by the steering committee as areas of promising practice. The district procedures currently meet requirements.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

Through file reviews and interview, the monitoring team agrees the district needs to decrease the number of situations in which the 25 school day evaluation time line is extended. In two files reviewed, the district extended the 25 school day evaluation timeline which resulted in exceeding the 3 year reevaluation timeline. Annual review dates were not affected in these situations, however, continuing current practice could result in a lapse of service.

Out of compliance

24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

School districts shall ensure a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and that evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by parents, that may assist in developing the content of the child's IEP.

Through interview and review of student files, the team validated functional assessment was not conducted in all areas of suspected disability in five of eight files. As a result, written reports of functional assessment are not available or provided to parents. Transition evaluations were not administered for two students of transition age, therefore present levels of performance were not linked to evaluation and included in the IEP.

Through file review and interview, the monitoring team found in four of eight files parent input into the evaluation/reevaluation process was not documented.

24:05:25:02 Determination of needed evaluation data

As part of an initial or reevaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs.

In all student files reviewed, with the exception of speech/language and early childhood, the monitoring team found consistently listed on the prior notice/consent for evaluation the Behavior Assessment for Children (BASC) and the personality test, House Tree Person. Interviews with special education teachers indicated the Cornbelt Cooperative has informed them that behavior assessments must be completed on all students suspected of a disability when requesting a psychological evaluation, even if the referral information did not reflect behavior concerns. The behavior assessment is completed as a precautionary step in the event of long-term suspension of the student. Based on this information, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consider the child's individual needs when making the determination of needed evaluation data.

24:05:25:06.01. Consent for reevaluation.

Before conducting a reevaluation of an eligible child, parental consent is required, unless the district has documented every reasonable measure has been taken to acquire the consent.

Through a review of two student files, evaluations were administered without parent consent. In both cases, adaptive behavior evaluations were administered but were not included on the prior notice/consent as an area to be evaluated. In four files reviewed by the team, consent for evaluation was obtained however, not all evaluations listed on the prior notice/consent were administered. For example, consent was provided to evaluate the area of personality, however, this area was not assessed. In another situation, consent was received to evaluate the areas of adaptive behavior, fine motor, and social skills. There was no evidence these assessments occurred as they could not be located in the students file.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Table L and M
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that district administrators have received training on the procedures necessary in the appointment of a surrogate parent. The district comprehensive plan addresses policies and procedures for the destruction of student records, ensuring all students receive a free and appropriate public education, and dealing with complaints, and due process. Parents are consistently provided parental rights information and consent is consistently obtained prior to evaluation and placement.

Validation Results

Meets requirement

Through observation, file review and interview, the monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State K and N

- Surveys
- Report form

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded assistance provided by special education teacher in the regular classroom allows students to remain in the least restrictive environment.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded team meetings are held with the required team membership and that parent and regular educators provide input at team meetings. Student records are available to regular education staff for review. The individual education program addresses participation with non-disabled peers, considers least restrictive environment and the student's participation in district and state-wide assessment. Employment needs are documented for transition age students. Individual education program plans are written to meet the individual needs of the student. Goals are linked to the present levels of performance and parents receive a copy of the individual education plan. Parents within the district can call for an individual education program meeting.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to consistently meet evaluation timelines, document the frequency, locations and duration of modifications and develop appropriate transition goals for students of transition age.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded the district was out of compliance in the area of transition evaluations.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through observation, file review and teacher interview the monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting requirements under individualized education programs as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified in need of improvement as concluded by the steering committee. For example, the IEP agreed to extend the 25 school day evaluation timeline and documented it correctly. But as a result, the reevaluation process exceeded the 3 year reevaluation deadline. This occurred in three separate files. In spite of not meeting the 3 year reevaluation date, the team did conduct the IEP within the required timeline.

Through file review, modifications were not consistently documented. Sometimes frequency was documented, but location was not documented. In other files frequency was not addressed.

Transition goals need to link to the present level of performance which link directly to the transition evaluation. Because transition evaluations were not routinely administered the transition goals did not identify specific skill areas.

Through file review and interview the monitoring team identified the need to establish a consistent procedure for determining and documenting extended school year services. The amount of extended school year services was not consistently documented for all service needs identified. For example, the individualized education team identified the academic and related services goals to be addressed during extended school year for a student. The beginning date, ending date and the amount of time was documented only for the student's academic goals. There was no such documentation for the related services to be provided during extended school year.

Out of compliance

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Transition evaluations were not administered for two students of transition age. As a result, present levels of performance, annual goals and needed services were not linked to evaluation in order to design an outcome oriented process which promotes movement from school to post-secondary school activities. Transition services and activities need to be utilized as a planning device to help ensure the students achieved their desired outcomes for employment and independent living. The student outcome statements need to focus on what the student "wants to achieve" rather than statements like "is capable of living independently."

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the specific skill areas affected by the student's disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. Present levels of performance must contain the student's strengths, needs, effect of the disability on the student's involvement/progress in the general curriculum and parent input.

Through file reviews, the monitoring team concluded due to the lack of functional assessments present levels of performance and annual goals did not represent specific skills the student was able to accomplish or needed to learn in each area affected by the disability. For example, in one file, there were no strengths or needs listed in the area of reading on the present level of performance but a goal was written for the area of reading.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables E,G, I, J, F, and N
- File reviews

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded that district staff needs more training in the area of special education and would like more time for communication.

Validation Results

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needs improvement for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee. Through file review, 54% of the staff indicated they need more time in the day to complete necessary tasks, including communication between common staff. Although 96% of the teachers indicate they modify and adapt curriculum, 20% of the district staff reported they did not have adequate training to implement IEPs.